

Kenya should ride on brand Obama

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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Kenyan marketers should thank President Barack Obama for free publicity that is worth billions of US dollars. During his inauguration on Tuesday, 20 January 2009 and before the world, Obama saluted the “small village” where his (Kenyan) father was born.

According to Keith Reinhard, chairman emeritus of DDB Worldwide, Obama has three things you want in a brand - he's new, different, and attractive. Has Kenya taken advantage of this new, different and attractive brand?

Sadly, the answer is no. “I even thought one of the mobile companies would introduce an Obama calling tariff,” notes Moses Mwaura, regional director, Enablis East Africa. Marketers in Kenya seem blind to the immense opportunities the Obama brand could open. “We should have fun with the Obama brand and market it now while things are,” says Tom Sitati, executive director, Interbrand Sampson East Africa.

Kenya is known for its athletes, coffee, art, music, spectacular wildlife and therein lies an opportunity to share with the world goods and services from the home of the first US African-American president. Kenya is one of the most vibrant economies in the Eastern African region which should automatically make it a hot attraction for investors. Sadly, Kenya has no indigenous brands with a global presence. In Kenya, majority shares of most leading companies are owned by foreigners.

Obama however, has broken ground and creating a buzz about Kenya should not be difficult. It is now easier to sell anything Kenyan in any part of the world. All exports should be clearly branded Kenyan. Local product and service providers should up their game and live up to the Obama brand promise.

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